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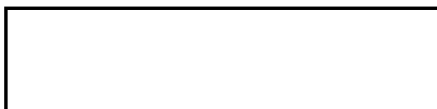
Cease-Fire Developments

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State Department review completed

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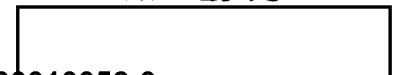
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Cease-Fire Developments

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SOUTH VIETNAMCease-Fire Taking Hold?

Military activity by both sides has dropped sharply during the past twenty-four hours, to the lowest level since the cease-fire agreement was signed in January. Action was very slight in every delta province except Chuong Thien, but the fighting has also slackened substantially there. In the only other significant battle area, South Vietnamese forces west of Kontum City have still made little progress in their efforts to recapture two villages recently taken by the Communists. General Toan, commander of Military Region 2, reportedly has concluded that there is little possibility of retaking Ploi Krong, the westernmost village.

[redacted] the Communists on 1 June passed a letter via the ICCS team at Ben Het to Toan, offering to move back to positions held on 28 January, in conjunction with similar moves by the South Vietnamese. In return, Toan was to order his forces to stop all military activity throughout the region. Toan dismissed the letter, attributed to a "DRV representative," as a propaganda ploy. More recently, [redacted]

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[redacted] the Communists have sought to arrange discussions between the opposing battlefield commanders in the area west of the provincial capital. The South Vietnamese reportedly are rejecting such overtures, as they have done with similar offers in Binh Dinh Province. [redacted]

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CAMBODIAThe Military Situation

President Lon Nol has assigned Phnom Penh's 1st Division to clearing operations along Route 5. One battalion from the division has already left the capital, and five others are to head north up the highway on 21 June. The Khmer Communists, meanwhile, continue to probe government positions on Route 5 at Tuk Laak and Sala Lek Pram, some 45 miles from Phnom Penh. In the southwest, two truck convoys transited Route 4 without incident on 20 June, following government sweep operations west of Phnom Penh.

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Elsewhere, Communist troops continue to resist government efforts to reopen Route 6 northeast of Phnom Penh. The highway has been cut and partially occupied between the towns of Phaav and Skoun. Southeast of Phnom Penh, the Communists on 20 June continued to probe government positions along the east bank of the Mekong River near Banam, but activity in that area has been relatively light in recent days.

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Political Prisoners Released

The government on 18 June released several leading civilian and military followers of Prince Sihanouk, apparently as a conciliatory gesture toward the former head of state and the Khmer Communists. Most had been in jail since Sihanouk's ouster more than

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three years ago. Among those released was Oum
Mannourine, the brother of Sihanouk's wife.

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LAOSThe Negotiations

Government chief negotiator Pheng Phongsavan and Communist envoy Phoumi Vongvichit are deliberately by-passing major points of disagreement during their daily negotiating sessions. Their plan apparently is to get agreement on as many points as possible and to prevent the talks from bogging down on any one issue. After discussing all of the issues, they presumably will go to Souvanna with the unsettled points.

Pheng has told Charge Dean that the two sides reached general agreement on the composition of a new coalition government, but did not attempt to cope with continued Communist insistence that Souphanouvong be named deputy prime minister and that the Pathet Lao hold the Interior Ministry. The two sides on 16 June agreed on the number of members on the Joint National Political Council, but disagreed on the composition and leadership of the body. Pheng felt that these differences were not major stumbling blocks. At their next meeting, Pheng and Phoumi focused on the duration of the mandate of the new coalition government. Phoumi opposed any reference in the protocol that would set a time limit on a new government.

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